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ACCENT ON ACTION

A NEW APPROACH TO MINORITY GROUP PROBLEMS IN AMERICA

By
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ALFRED J. MARROW
CHARLES E. HENDRY

COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY INTERRELATIONS
OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS



A C C E N T

O n A C T I O N

A New Approach to Minority
Group Problems in America

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A NOTE ON CCI

A new attack on minority group problems in the United States was launched late in 1944 when the Commission on Community Interrelations was established by the American Jewish Congress. A research organization of a new type, the Commission merges fact-finding and action to dig out the reasons for conflict and to do something about them. CCI focusses on Jewish-non-Jewish problems, but fully recognizes that cultural groups are interrelated, not isolated. CCI works with Jewish and non-Jewish groups of all types and offers its services freely to other organizations concerned with problems of inter-group tension, friction and conflict.

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FOREWARD

By Henry Epstein

Chairman, National Advisory Board
Commission on Community Interrelations

The first public appearance of the Commission on Community Interrelations was made before a large group of businessmen and industrialists at a special meeting at the Hotel Biltmore in New York on February 15, 1945.

These were men with a double stake in the new Commission. As men of goodwill, they came hoping to hear--and to agree--that the Commission was indeed launching a vital attack on the relentless problem of anti-Semitism and the related problems of inter-group tension and hostility. As members of the Business and Professional Associates of the American Jewish Congress, many of whom on faith had pledged financial support to this new program, they came also with the appraising eye of backers of a new venture. They came to judge--and they ended by cheering.

When the CCI was asked to present its story on this occasion, it was clear that there were three men who should share the assignment, for they had so largely created the ideas upon which the Commission on Community Interrelations was founded, had shaped its pattern and set the program in operation. They were Dr. Kurt Lewin, the eminent social psychologist, who is the Commission's Chief Consultant; Dr. Alfred J. Marrow, the Commission's Finance Chairman, who embodies that rare professional combination: social psychologist and successful industrialist; and Charles E. Hendry, the Commission's Coordinator of Research who, over a period of years as National Director of Research for the Boy Scouts of America and in other positions, had helped to develop many of the present day methods of action research.

It was fitting, too, that these three men should share the speakers' platform with two others who were instrumental in making the Commission a reality--incorporating its activities in the over-all program of the American Jewish Congress, but assuring freedom of operation to guarantee the scientific integrity of the undertaking. They were Dr. Stephen S. Wise, President of the American Jewish Congress, and Rabbi Irving Miller, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Congress. The faith that these two men have shown in the Commission ever since its initial plans were outlined in the Summer of 1944 and in the Commission's broad orientation to problems involving both Jewish and non-Jewish groups, was eloquently re-emphasized--yes, in very practical terms by Dr. Wise, who assured his listeners that the American Jewish Congress has pledged \$1,500,000 to the CCI to cover five years of operation.

In the following pages are presented the statements, slightly abridged, of Dr. Lewin, Dr. Marrow, and Mr. Hendry. Speaking as the scientist,

and the "father" of the Commission, Dr. Lewin presented its philosophy and developed its broader goals. As a man of business, who is also a scientist, Dr. Marrow spoke of the strategy of science not only in its wider community aspects but in the field of industry as well. Mr. Hendry set the stage for both present and future operations of the Commission and told how the layman plays a vital role in this new challenging combination of action and research.

The three statements together provide a framework, a definition, and a promise of great hope.

PHILOSOPHY AND BROADER GOALS
OF THE COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY INTERRELATIONS

By Kurt Lewin

The basic idea of the Commission on Community Interrelations is simple. Jews and non-Jews of goodwill should be able to agree on it, independent of their personal outlook. It is a common sense proposition, rather a businesslike idea; namely, to base action in matters of Jewish, non-Jewish relations on facts and on realistic treatment of facts.

We know that the situation in regard to minorities in this country, as in other countries, is not what it ought to be. But we know, too, from a thousand experiences that dishing out praise or blame is not an efficient method of education, and we do not believe either that "complaining" or "preaching goodwill" is an efficient means of making things better. No section of personal or social life can be improved or made over merely by setting up nice ideals; one has to find also the correct ways and means to achieve them. Not only the ideal is needed but hard boiled realistic action.

On the other hand, we do not want that type of so-called "realistic policy" which lives from day to day, patching up a hole here and applying a new coat there: such a policy seems to fear nothing more than to face the now obvious fact that minority problems everywhere are dynamite.

What are the Facts about Friction?

Any constructive plan must see both the long range goal and the day-by-day action. It should see not only the local situation--the peculiar constellations and personalities involved--but also the broader issues and the social forces behind them. To be constructive, action should be as free of hysterical fear as of false illusions of safety. In other words, constructive action has to be based on facts.

These facts are not available today. Sociological statistics about the distribution of Jews in various occupations are valuable in themselves. But no facts about the low percentage of Jews in the banking business will kill anti-Semitism. We all know that anti-Semitism is not based on "reason." It is the expression of social forces which will never be at a loss to invent some "reasons," however illogical.

That the forces of anti-Semitism are not rational, does not give us the right to ignore them; nor does their irrational character place them outside the approach of science. Like leadership, or other forms of group life, the relation between a majority and a minority can be studied in an objective and scientific manner.

To be of value for action, these studies of group interrelations have to reach beyond the surface. To be the basis for action, fact-finding has to include all aspects of community life, economic factors as well as political factors or cultural tradition. It has to include the majority and the minority, non-Jews and Jews. The staff of the CCI is composed of Jews and non-Jews, of sociologists, psychologists and community organizers to fit this variety of tasks.

The consultant engineer whose job it is to assist industry in organizing factories knows that every factory presents a special problem. Similarly, the expert on community relations who is to assist the large and small communities in establishing better group relations will have to study the peculiar constellation in each town if he shall be able to make workable suggestions.

Unfortunately, social engineering as a science is very much in the beginning stages. In an autocracy, those in power are not ashamed to manipulate groups, and the art of manipulating weaker for exploitation is acclaimed as a natural right of the stronger. In a democracy, the respect for human dignity and a feeling of decency has led to a peculiar dilemma: the decent citizen apologizes for his lack of active participation in group affairs by condemning "group manipulation" and leaving this "dirty business" to the politicians.

We do not want group manipulation, but we do need that amount of management of groups which is necessary for harmonious living together. We want this group management to be done "by the people, for the people." That presupposes that not only the social scientists has to know more about the factors which make for good or poor relations between groups in a community; this knowledge will have to be common knowledge to the ordinary citizen. To my mind, there is hardly anything more essential for the survival and the progress of democracy than that every citizen understands more clearly how the "right to be different" and the "cooperation for the common good" can and should be integrated for harmonious group relations in a democracy.

"Experts" are not Enough

The work of the CCI will not be research done by the expert in the ivory tower producing books for libraries. If the Commission succeeds in liberating the great reservoir of intellectual and moral capacity of the Jewish and non-Jewish community, the community itself will find in this case, as it has done in other cases, solutions which are superior to anything that a chief of police or a sociologist or a clever politician, or any other type of expert, can think about. These solutions will not be an easy panacea, but the double program of research and action will gradually give us deeper insight and will teach us, step by step, how to handle matters.

The CCI approaches the minority problems as one of the crucial issues of a developing democracy; an issue that has to be solved in a democratic spirit, nationally and internationally, if democracy as a form of living is to survive. (And if we shall have any chance to win the peace.) Each of the minorities--for instance, Negroes, Catholics, Mexicans, and Jews--has its own special problem but all should learn from each other.

Recent studies indicate that many aspects of the inner structure are similar in different minority groups. For instance, not only the Jews seem to fight among themselves. We may study with profit how some groups that were in a minority position but 20 years ago have been able to raise their social status.

In characterizing the kind of group relations we should work for, I would like to say that we are not pleased with the term "tolerance." We are not satisfied "to be tolerated." Nor do we think other people will be satisfied to be tolerated by us. Tolerance is the smoke screen behind which Hitler rose to power. The settlers who came to America to live in a free country did not seek tolerance. They hated intolerance. I think it is time to return to this basic idea of a young and tough democracy that fought against intolerance and for a positive "equality of man."

The Need for Better Social Visibility

The last 10 years have left us bewildered. We have been accustomed for a thousand years to live in many uncertainties; we never have known whether a person who addresses us in the name of Christianity comes as a God-sent helper or as a deadly enemy. Today these uncertainties have multiplied. We don't know whether the speaker who praises the American Constitution means to help or to attack us. We do not know whether a scrap between a Jewish and non-Jewish group of adolescents is but an old fashioned feud between neighborhood gangs or an ugly symptom of growing fascism. The CCI will do its utmost to help the Jewish and non-Jewish community to clear this fog in which we all live. More than anything else, we need better social visibility around us, to distinguish what is important and what is unimportant, to know what is a solid, although somewhat rough, road and what is treacherous quicksand. Only a thoroughly realistic approach with the infra-red rays of social science can hope to get to the facts.

The last, but not the least, point I would like to mention deals with relations within our own ranks. With increasing pressure from without, Jews, like any other group, show friction within, just at a time when unity is most urgently needed. These differences of opinion should not be seen as mere signs of personal bad will or stupidity, nor as something that could be abandoned over night. The issues behind them are real and crucial, particularly in critical times.

However, we should encourage the Jewish groups which follow different lines to find out each for themselves, in the most realistic way possible, what the actual effect of their own action is. Although the means placed at the disposal of the CCI make all of us keenly aware of the responsibilities involved, these means are small, relative to the job to be done. We have been glad to stretch our hand out to research projects of other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. We have found most cordial receptions and

anticipate close and productive cooperation. We are looking forward with confidence to establishing in the area of fact-finding close links with different Jewish and non-Jewish groups. At least these research sections will learn to speak the same language and to understand each other.

STRATEGY OF SCIENCE
IN COMBATING MINORITY GROUP CONFLICT

By Alfred J. Marrow

Years ago, the subject of labor relations would have been one that industrial leaders would have considered a problem of interest only to other industrialists. But today this is no longer so. For few issues in American History have created so deep a cleavage as has labor-management relations. Higher wages and improved working conditions have not eliminated or even reduced the frequency of conflict. In fact, recent Department of Labor statistics reveal that labor conflicts are as frequent when earnings are at their peak as when earnings are much lower and that conflicts are as frequent in plants paying high wages as in plants paying a lower wage scale.

Action Research--Guidepost for Industry

About five years ago, some action research experiments were begun in industry in an effort to discover some of the basic causes for the group hostility. Among the findings that have been considered most significant are those relating to the structure of management which was found to be inherently military or dictatorial. Power and authority were found to flow principally in one direction--downward. Those in authority could direct their aggressions on those below them and thereby provide an outlet for the release of such hostile tensions as could not be directed at the real source, such as a superior. In such a hierarchy, the man at the bottom of the pyramid of authority--the average worker--has no outlet for his repressed tensions.

The fascist leaders recognized that unless the man at the bottom was given an outlet for the tension resulting from the pressure from his superiors, the accumulated tensions would finally lead to an occasional explosion. For this reason, they developed the race superiority theory which made it possible to attack Jews and other minorities as scapegoats who could be safely attacked without fear of retaliation.

In our industrial experiment situations, complete dependence upon authority was replaced with group discussion and group decision. The dictatorial leaders were retrained along democratic methods. The morale of the workers improved significantly and the production per man-hour rose to the highest level in the company's history. At the same time, such by-products of hostility as machine breakage and material spoilage was noticeably reduced. These findings which are of great importance to industry are likewise of im-

portance to us in our study of group relations at the community level.

The CCI Program

Our aim in the Commission on Community Interrelations is to try to find out what are the real roots from which group hostility arises. We are interested in doing a job that gets right to the core of the problem. We think in that respect we have an educational problem to do with the public because they have been traditionally more interested in cures than in prevention. Even in medicine, the emphasis until ten years ago was on therapy instead of on prevention. Today, fortunately, that emphasis is being changed.

We, too, are interested in a preventive job--finding the facts and then trying to cure the abuses we discover before they get out of hand rather than trying to handle the abuse after an outbreak has occurred.

One of our first objectives is to study the methods that have been used in the past to combat anti-Semitism. There have been lectures, inter-faith meetings, pamphlets, radio time, other programs of a similar nature. But do we know whether those methods do what we hope they will? Do they really change attitudes? Are they really eliminating the basic causes of hostility?

We are not prepared at this time to evaluate the results of all the work that has been done thus far. However, as practical men we realize that we need to test our procedures and find out if they are effective, and if they are not, we must devise other means which are effective. Success is too often measured in terms of output, such as the amount of newspaper space or radio time extended a particular handout. This is a method used by organizations concerned more with publicity than effect. What should count is effectiveness. We must constantly test the effectiveness of our methods and not until we have found successful ones should they be launched in systematic campaigns.

There are, of course, many opinions about why group hostilities exist, why we have anti-Semitism. In a democracy, these opinions are all to be encouraged. However, we are interested not so much in differences of opinion, as in getting at the real facts.

How Do Group Hatreds Breed?

We must know, for example, why some people join an anti-Semitic organization and other people, from similar environments, do not. We must know why some people who join become active and others do not. We must investigate the personality of the individual who, in his personal relationships, is not anti-Semitic and yet, as a group member, on the board of a medical school or a country club, is highly anti-Semitic. Why, as a member of a group in a particular role, does he act violently anti-Semitic and how does he reconcile this with some of his friends who may be Jewish and really good friends?

We need to know whether interaction between Jews and non-Jews leads to difficulty or to improved relations. We want to know the effect of different percentages of Jews in a particular community and the influence of increased or decreased percentages of Jews in the population. We do know that we have had anti-Semitic outbreaks in our own city of New York in areas where

the Jewish population was some 83 per cent. We also have had anti-Semitic activities in areas where the Jewish population is five per cent.

Is saturation, or percentage, therefore, a crucial item? How much of anti-Semitism arises in the home, the school or the church? At what age do anti-Semitic attitudes first express themselves? These are problems that are soluble to us and it is those facts we must have if we are going to fight them properly.

One of the most astonishing accomplishments in the last ten years has been what is referred to as a revolutionary technique of public opinion sampling. In the last Presidential election, every one of the scientific polls predicted within a margin, at the widest, of 1.1 per cent how the forty-odd million people of this country were going to vote. That is a powerful instrument in our hands because it makes it possible to go into a community and, by testing a sample of the population, to determine the tensions, to find out how strong the feelings are, and possibly, through our interviews, the causes of hostility.

So, with a tool of this type, it becomes possible to handle a job that previously was not possible, because instead of interviewing 100,000 people in a particular town, we can, by interviewing five per cent or less, now know how the entire community feels.

Using Facts to Overcome Conflicts

Our work consists not only of getting the facts, but doing something about them. To that end there has been assembled, both on the staff of the Commission and its Research Advisory Council, some of the outstanding social scientists in the United States. These are not people who join organizations to have their names on letterheads. They are people such as Gordon W. Allport, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University; Douglas M. McGregor of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Rensis Likert of the Department of Agriculture; Edward Tolman of the University of California; Margaret Mead of the American Museum of Natural History, and others--all of them working members of our Advisory Council on Research.

These people have been challenged by the problem which anti-Semitism and minority group conflicts means to the future of our country. They see in the Commission an opportunity to really get at the roots of the problem and eradicate them. So, supported by the country's leading scientists and with a staff manned by the most competent people, we are fortified to take those facts and do something about them.

We have planned and already begun four projects, all of them action-minded. These are not just studies that will help to fill library files. Every project undertaken by the CCI is a tough-minded approach to the problems of group conflict. The Commission's task force actually goes into a community just as a task force in the Army would do. The task force has defined relationships to the place, to the churches, to the schools, to the home. It includes trained interviewers of different nationalities: people able to go into homes of all types and talk the language, to really find the basic social, economic, religious, or political causes at the roots of the anti-Semitic expressions that disturb the peace of the community.

The work will be done in areas throughout the country. In addition, there will be cooperative studies conducted by universities in various areas. It is intended to work out arrangements with universities under which their graduate students will do research in the field of group relationships and in that way contribute greatly to our understanding of what is going on in other areas of the country..

We believe in the democratic principles of participation by all people in their affairs. We do not subscribe to the fascist doctrine that the mass of people is incapable of self-government and cannot be entrusted with decisions relating to their own affairs. For that reason we expect to enlist actual participation by members of each community into which we are called, in order that they themselves may do parts of the work connected with analyzing and do some therapy in their particular communities.

We believe that it is possible for people with different cultures, different creeds and different beliefs to live together in harmony and with good fellowship, and it is toward that goal that we of the Commission have all dedicated ourselves.

RESEARCH GOES INTO ACTION

By Charles E. Hendry

Some time ago when Beardsley Ruml left the University of Chicago to become Treasurer of Macy's, he was asked the main difference he found between a department store and a university.

"Well," he said, "the main difference is that in business the problems are intellectual."

I have a feeling, after having heard Dr. Marrow and Dr. Lewin, that maybe the problems are mutually intellectual in the two fields: business and the professional life.

This is Research in Action

I am going to be rather informal and refer very briefly to one study we conducted while I was with the Boy Scouts of America, because I think it illustrates the action research approach that is involved here.

One evening, in Chicago, a group of business men were gathered together--the Executive Council of the Boy Scouts of America for that particular territory. A report had been given on the situation for Chicago showing a marked decline in Scout membership. Large numbers of boys were dropping out of scouting: 10,000 had left during that year.

One of the business men stood up and said: "Gentlemen, in my business, if our sales were falling off that way, we would go to the consumer and find out what was the matter. Why don't we do that--go to the boy and find out why he is leaving the movement." They phoned our office in New York and we sent Dr. Alvin Zander, now one of our consultants, to Chicago to talk with the executive staff and some of the executive board members.

To make a long story short, a rather ingenious game board interview technique was developed. It looked like a game of Monopoly when set down before a boy. A sampling was made of 500 boys distributed in all sections of the city, and 75 men--laymen like yourselves--were trained to share in the job of interviewing these dropped Scouts.

When approached for interviews, in parks and in other places, the boys did not know that they were being interviewed on scouting by a scout

person; they were being interviewed generally on their recreational experience. Then the interview gradually focussed down upon scouting. Having this gameboard before them broke the ice. The gulf between the adult and the boy was bridged.

The boys were supplied with about 55 little arrows. Each arrow carried a number and a reason why at least some boys dropped out of scouting--55 such arrows. These were placed on the gameboard, on areas such as home, school, neighborhood. In the center was the area of Scout life itself: the program, the leadership, the Scout's companions, and so on. The boy was simply asked to go through these arrows quickly and discard any that did not apply to him. The interviewer would watch the boy very carefully. If he hesitated on a given arrow, a mental note would be made of that. Later the man would say: "I noticed on this particular arrow you seemed to hesitate. Why did you do that?" It drove the lad down a little deeper in the analysis of why he had dropped out of this organization. Or the interviewer might ask: "Well, now, what kind of thoughts went through your mind as you were doing this?" That sent the boy further back into his experience and a bit deeper.

Then the interviewer handed over some little chips and said: "Put three on those arrows that are the most important, two on those less important and one on those that are least important." In that way we built up 500 interview records, scattered on a scientific sampling basis across the length and breadth of a great metropolitan city.

The data were brought to New York, put on IBM cards and run through the electrical machines very quickly. They were analyzed in a preliminary way by our statisticians and psychologists. Then we sent work sheets and work tables to Chicago for the group there to work on--a group of men like yourselves.

Having carried out the interviews, they had angles we could not have in making the interpretation. The data came back to us with this further refinement of thought and we did additional work on the analysis.

We insisted that one of the men in Chicago come to New York for a solid month to join our work group. He did and produced this report, writing it himself, with editorial and technical assistance from two people now on the staff of our Commission, Mr. Russell Hogrefe and Miss Claire Selltitz.

That, I think, not only illustrates the action research approach. It shows that there is no monopoly in this process for the scientists, for the technician.

The CCI's First Job

One morning last September, before I joined the staff, but when it was known I would be coming to the Commission shortly, the phone rang in my office at national Scout headquarters. Dr. Lillian Kay was on the other end. She was holding down the job until I got there. She said: "Well, Chick, we are in business." I said: "What's up?" She went on to

tell me the story you find in those first two pages of our pamphlet TASK FORCE--the synagogue incident in Coney Island. We immediately geared for action, mobilized a task force of psychologists, public opinion measurement technicians and others, to go out to Coney Island.

Within a very short time--I was rather amazed at the speed with which Dr. Kay, as the director of the project, was able to do this--we had a group of twenty persons operating in that field. The task force first went to work on a census of the community on a sampling basis. Then taking 220 families corresponding to the population distribution in that particular area--Jews, Italians, and Negroes--intensive interviewing soon was under way by our interviewers, who were trained, incidentally, by a technical expert from the Department of Agriculture who has been associated with us for this type of work.

It is very amusing to hear some of the stories the interviewers brought back. In some cases, for example, the folks in the community became so interested in telling their stories that they invited the interviewer in for a meal. Instead of staying for a half hour or so to carry the normal interview forward, a member of our task force might stay for three or four hours, right in the bosom of the family.

While that has gone ahead we have been working very closely with some of the youth clubs out there--even helped them run a big dance at Coney Island last Sunday night. The whole process is part of action research. Yes, the Italian boys who actually precipitated the incident have now become partners in getting at why they did it and what to do about it.

We have started work on our first motion picture, which will center partly on that incident. The scenario is being written now and plans are well advanced for production.

Who's Who on the Staff

Now, just a few remarks about over-all strategy.

First, our planning survey. We are very fortunate in having secured Dr. Goodwin Watson of Columbia University as survey director and, associated with him, Dr. Naomi Goldstein. For the past few months they have been working to get the picture of major programs under way in this field of minority groups and the organizations working on them, particularly as related to combating anti-Semitism. They have been working on both the national and local levels, delving into the basic assumptions underlying these various programs and the distinctive methods being used. They have been making some evaluation and pulling out implications for us, helping us develop a realistic strategy and determine the priorities in the job ahead.

They have gone into a number of cities, including Newark, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, spending from a week to two weeks in each place, and have brought back a set of recommendations to guide us in our over-all policy planning.

As Director of Public Relations, we brought Mr. Harold P. Levy to our staff from the Russell Sage Foundation. He is responsible for this little booklet TASK FORCE which is our bow--our way of telling the story, at

least in a preliminary way. As Dr. Lewin has pointed out, we have been consulting with other agencies in the field, trying to develop a cooperative arrangement so that we will be moving along with the full collaboration of those with whom we should be collaborating. We have had to spend considerable time articulating the Commission's program with the other divisions and the commissions of the American Jewish Congress.

We are in the process of setting up an experimental training center to be housed in our new quarters. Here, realistic training for work on inter-group tension and conflict will be given to community leaders whom we will bring to New York from various parts of the United States.

We are completing our National Advisory Board and our Advisory Councils on Research and Operations.

Two or three other rather important projects are moving forward now, very rapidly. One is in Baltimore. Not so long ago, the head of the Board of Hebrew Education in that city came to Dr. Lewin seeking our help in organizing a research seminar for Jewish and non-Jewish teachers, to assist them with the problems of tension and conflict involving school children. The project has been under way since January. Some forty teachers are participating with the full support of the superintendent of schools of Baltimore, and are now conducting a study on inter-group hostility at the school age level. Dr. Milton Blum of the College of the City of New York is directing this project for us, assisted by various other members of the Commission staff.

Another project I would like to mention very briefly is being carried on in Kingston, N. Y. under the direction of Dr. Juliet Bell. Some of you heard about the incident--the Christmas carol situation. We were called by the National Community Relations Advisory Council, representing all the major defense agencies at the national level, and asked to do something in that situation.

Dr. Bell came to the Commission from the National Board of the YWCA, where she recently completed a two-year study of Negro membership in that Association. She and Matthew Handler of the Jewish Welfare Board unit of the USO are now ready to move into Kingston with a rather fundamental approach to a very complex problem. Considerable basic planning already has gone on with representatives of the JWB, the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, the United Synagogue Council of America, and other groups that are involved.

We are receiving inquiries every day, ranging from California to Boston, from Canada to Australia, from groups of all types, Jewish and non-Jewish, seeking our collaboration in working on some of these problems. We have a big job ahead.

* * * * *

In the Commission on Community Interrelations we have a motto which runs something like this: "No research without operations; no operations without research." That we are going to follow, come hell or high water.

The quotation with which we end our little booklet TASK FORCE will be the guiding inspiration of our effort. It is taken from the great prophet Hillel, and says: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when?"